

Name _____ Hour _____

The Land of 10,000 Lakes

Minnesota is known as the Land of 10,000 lakes and this is no exaggeration. In fact, Minnesota has nearly 12,000 lakes of at least ten acres, and if smaller ones are counted, the number soars past 15,000. The state has so many lakes that some end up with the same name. Minnesota has 201 Mud Lakes, 154 Long Lakes, and 123 Rice Lakes. Minnesota itself means “sky-tinted water” in the Dakota Language. The Dakota were Native Americans who lived in Minnesota for hundreds of years before the Europeans came.

Minnesota’s Unique Geography

Without its unique geographical features, Minnesota would have no claim to its many state symbols. There would be no milk or muffins, no flour mills or lady’s-slippers, no walleye or loons. Tens of thousands of years ago, this region of North America benefited from the effects of slow glacial movement.

How does a glacier move?

Within a glacier there are “moulins”. A moulin is a narrow tube, hole or gap worn in the ice by surface water, which carries water from the surface to the base far below. These holes can go all the way to the bottom of the glacier and can be hundreds of meters deep.

These holes are parts of a glacier’s “plumbing” system, to carry melt water out to wherever it may go. Water often exits the glacier at base level. The gushing water through the ice pushes down on the glacier at the same time water seeps through cracks to the underside. In this way, water becomes a lubricating fluid at the base of the glacier, making the glacier move faster as it melts. The melting water encourages further ice loss and speeds the glacier’s flow to the sea, where large chunks break off to form icebergs.

How Glaciers Impacted Minnesota

Most of Minnesota’s lakes were formed thousands of years ago when sheets of ice called glaciers inched their way down from the frozen north. These glaciers went down deep in to the earth, scraping off the soil(dirt) down to the bare rock. By the time the glaciers retreated they had changed northern Minnesota into a rough, rocky landscape. Melting ice filled in the low spots, creating lakes.

In western Minnesota, the glaciers had a very different effect. There, when the ice melted, the water created a vast inland sea called Lake Agassiz. The lake existed for thousands of years and was the largest lake in North America. Over the years, mud and silt settled on the lake bottom. When the giant lake finally drained, around 9,000 years ago, it left behind some of the flattest, richest farmland in North America. This area is called the Red River Valley.

A wide area of lakes curve up the middle of Minnesota. These lakes formed between the mounds of dirt and crushed rock left behind by the glaciers. In southern Minnesota there is a layer of very rich soil that was pushed ahead of the glaciers as they moved to the south. This area has some of the country’s best farmland.

1. The passage states, "Without its unique geographical features, Minnesota would have no claim to its many state symbols." Using examples from the text explain in complete sentences 3 geographical features that exist in Minnesota because of glacial movements.
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2. What is soil?

- A. A Glacier
- B. Bare rock
- C. Dirt
- D. A Valley

3. What is Lake Agassiz?

- A. A lake in northern Minnesota where people can canoe
- B. A giant inland sea that drained about 9,000 years ago
- C. A lake in the Red River Valley Region of Minnesota
- D. One of the Great Lakes, it is located near Duluth

4. How do glaciers move across land?

- A. Glaciers float on the rivers, melting along the way, creating lakes.
- B. Glaciers are made of ice and slide on the frozen land much like on a sled.
- C. Glaciers are located in mountainous areas, higher elevations, allowing them to flow down from the higher places.
- D. Glaciers have tubes in them where melting water flows, the glacier moves on the melted water along the surface of the earth

5. How were the lakes in the middle of Minnesota created?

- A. A layer of very rich soil was pushed ahead of the glaciers as they moved to the south
- B. They were formed between the mounds of dirt and crushed rock left behind by the glaciers
- C. The glaciers went down deep in to the earth, scraping off the soil down to the bare rock
- D. When the glaciers melted they left behind a huge amount of water that became lakes

6. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A. Minnesota is known as the land of 10,000 lakes
- B. The land of Minnesota were shaped by glaciers
- C. Glaciers move and change over time
- D. Minnesota has some of the best farmland in the country